

Dear Mr. Minsky:

Thank you for your presentation during the public meeting of the Mississippi River Commission held in Mayersville, Mississippi, on August 20, 2003. In your statement you discussed progress on the Mississippi River Levee enlargement program as well as maintenance gravel and levee slide repairs. You requested support and endorsement for the Tensas Basin feasibility phase study. You also expressed concern over the administration's plans to outsource certain activities within the Corps.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers appreciates your assistance in the briefings and site visit for Congressman David Hobson, the Chairman of the Subcommittee on Energy and Water. This was instrumental in helping present the on-the-ground condition of our projects.

The Corps is pleased with the progress being made on the Mississippi River Levees project. Construction of items in East Carroll Parish has been completed and work has moved south into Madison Parish. Design work is proceeding on several items in Concordia Parish, near Vidalia, Louisiana. Construction of Items 461-R, 457-R, and 453-R began this summer. Items 480-R and 485-R are essentially complete, except for turfing. Several items are scheduled for award in Fiscal Year 2004.

The Commission appreciates the support of the Fifth Louisiana Levee District as you continue to express to the

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Louisiana Congressional delegation the need for adequate Federal funding to continue levee construction. In addition, we recognize the State of Louisiana as they continue to fund the Fifth Louisiana Levee Board in purchasing the necessary rights-of-way to continue levee construction. We continue to work with the Levee District, the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development, police juries, and other state and Federal officials to work out problems as they arise so the Mississippi River Levee enlargement program can advance as rapidly as possible.

The Commission understands that repair of levee slides is critical to maintain the integrity of the Mississippi River

Levee system. The Vicksburg District conducted an inspection of the levee this past spring in the locations where slides in your District were noted. Slide repairs began in May and we anticipate that all slides should be repaired by this December. Of those slides specifically noted in your statement, repairs should begin this month.

The Corps recognizes your desire to provide additional flood protection, water supply, and environmental restoration to the Tensas Basin Area. A reconnaissance study was initiated in Fiscal Year 2002 and is scheduled for completion in December 2003.

The President has directed all Federal agencies to open as many commercially available services to competition as possible as part of his Presidential Management Agenda to assure the best value to the taxpayer. The requirement is to compete the function, not necessarily to outsource, unless that provides the best value. In competitions to date, the Federal agency has won the majority of the time. In implementing this program, the Corps has been sensitive to the needs of its missions, including the need to maintain a high level of technical expertise. The Corps depends on contractors to execute much of its work under the oversight of its engineers and scientists. Under the current plan to open certain functions to commercial competition, core expertise has been specifically exempted from competition.

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The Commission appreciates receiving your comments and will be pleased to hear from you at our future public meetings.

Sincerely,

Don T. Riley
Brigadier General, U.S. Army
President Designee, Mississippi
River Commission